

State of Maryland
Executive Chamber
Annapolis May 19. 1862

Col. Wm. D. Bowie

Chairman of Committee of Citizens &c.

Sir:

On Friday last the 16th Inst. a Committee of some of the Citizens of Prince Georges, Anne Arundel and Calvert Counties of which you were the Chairman, called upon me and presented a paper setting forth a preamble and resolutions referring to the large numbers of slaves now escaping from those Counties and making their way into the District of Columbia, and indicating certain Executive proceedings which they call upon me to take with the view of arresting the evil.

It does not appear when or where the meeting which adopted these Resolutions took place, or who or how many composed it, but I have nevertheless given to the subject that deliberate and respectful consideration which the character of the Committee and the importance of the subject demand —

The preamble recites in substance that since the passage of the act of Congress abolishing slavery in the District of Columbia, large and organized bands of slaves in the adjacent Counties of Maryland under the influence of that act and in an armed and threatening manner, have escaped and are still escaping into the District where they are sheltered and protected by persons representing themselves as Federal officers, and that the Marshal of the District refuses to execute civil process for the arrest and recovery of these slaves under the fugitive slave law, alleging that he is so acting under instructions from the President or Secretary of State — In view of these evils the Resolutions request me "to call out such force and posse or patrols in the Counties where such evils exist as may be necessary to suppress the disorders above recapitulated" — also "to protest to the Federal authorities against the aforementioned illegal and unconstitutional action of Federal officers & soldiers both in and upon the confines of the District of Columbia in protecting runaways and assisting in their escape" —

The principal action on my part to which these resolutions point and which your Committee particularly pressed — the calling out of such a force or posse in these Counties as should be adequate to the suppression of these evils — seemed to me obnoxious to objections which I at once suggested to you, and which all the subsequent reflection I have since given to the subject only tends to confirm; and as you requested that I would state these objections in writing I take the earliest opportunity of complying with your request — In the first place it seems to me, that to organize a force in these several Counties adequate to the contemplated purpose would involve an expense to the State that could be hardly justified by the probable value of all